

PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN

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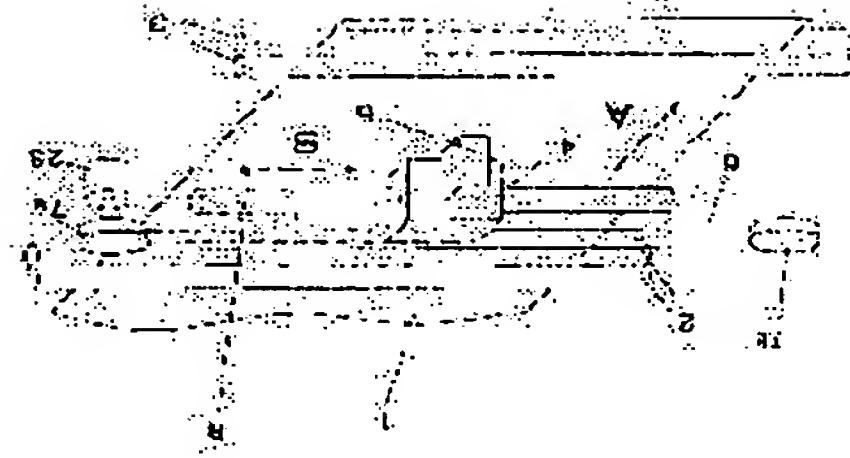
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(54) INK JET RECORDER

(57)Abstract:

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To provide an ink jet recorder capable of uniform printing even with a recording head having a variation in the ejection quantity or the ejecting direction by setting the correction γ value of each raster while taking account of three raster densities of main raster and preceding/following rasters incident to ejection from each nozzle.

SOLUTION: The ink jet recorder has a pattern for detecting the dot diameter/dot shift and a pattern for detecting the unevenness of each nozzle. Based on the former pattern output results, quantities of ink being ejected to a raster corresponding to each nozzle and to adjacent rasters are detected. Based on the latter pattern output results, an average density is detected. Uniform printing is carried out by correcting the quantity of ink being ejected from each nozzle while taking account of the quantity of ink being detected such that all raster densities become the average density in the latter pattern.



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CLAIMS

[Claim(s)]

[Claim 1]

The ink-jet recording device characterized by the thing of each nozzle do for the amount amendment of regurgitation ink in consideration of [that have the diameter of a dot and the dot kink detection pattern, and the unevenness detection pattern of each nozzle, detect the amount of ink in which the contiguity nozzle of the amount of ink in which a nozzle carries out the regurgitation to a raster from a former pattern output, and said nozzle carries out the regurgitation to said raster, detect average concentration from a latter pattern output, and total raster concentration turns into said average concentration in a latter pattern] said amount of detection ink.

[Claim 2]

The ink-jet recording device characterized by the thing of each nozzle do for the amount amendment of regurgitation ink in consideration of [that have the diameter of a dot and the dot kink detection pattern, and the unevenness detection pattern of each nozzle, detect the amount of ink in which the amount of ink in which a nozzle carries out the regurgitation to a raster from a former pattern output, and said nozzle carry out the regurgitation to the contiguity raster of said raster, detect average concentration from a latter pattern output, and total raster concentration turns into said average concentration in a latter pattern] said amount of detection ink.

[Claim 3]

The ink jet recording device characterized by having the input device which detects the amount of ink, and concentration from a test pattern in claims 1 and 2.

[Claim 4]

The nozzle with which equips with a threshold said amount of ink taken into consideration, and the threshold is not filled in claims 1 and 2 is an ink jet recording device characterized by not using it.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Field of the Invention]

This invention relates to an ink jet recording device. Furthermore, it is related with the approach of reducing the unevenness in the scanning width of face of an ink jet recording device in a detail.

[0002]

[Description of the Prior Art]

There is a recording device as equipment which outputs an image, an alphabetic character, etc. Various methods, such as a record electrophotography method, a hot printing method, and a sublimation method, are developed. Moreover, it makes it possible to record these recording devices in a color by four colors which added black (K) to cyanogen (C), a Magenta (M), three colors of yellow (Y), or these 3 color. In this, an ink jet recording method is cheap and its attention is high especially as equipment which can perform silence, a high speed, and high resolution record.

[0003]

An ink jet recording method is a method which prints ink by making the ink adhere to discharge and a record medium from two or more deliveries by the heating element or the piezoelectric device. This recording device carries out the serial scan of the recording head equipped with two or more above-mentioned deliveries in the conveyance direction (the direction of vertical scanning) of a record medium, and the direction (main scanning direction) which goes direct, and it carries out image formation by forming discharge in this case and forming a dot for ink on a record medium. Since two or more deliveries arrange in the direction of vertical scanning, they accomplishes [record of the width of face corresponding to the number of deliveries].

Moreover, intermittent conveyance of the record medium is carried out in an amount equal to a recording width at the time of un-recording.

[0004]

moreover, recording head width of face -- ***** -- in being a certain full multi-mold ink jet recording device, the conveyance direction of a record medium is the same as the scanning direction of a recording head, and forms an image on a record medium with one scan.

[0005]

It is an ideal for the dot formed on a record medium to reach a desired pixel, and to carry out equal magnitude. However, the amount of ink and discharge direction in which a recording head carries out the regurgitation vary for every delivery. Therefore, if the regurgitation of the same number is performed according to the same gamma curve to all nozzles like before (drawing 14 (a)), as shown in that of drawing 14 (a), concentration difference unevenness will arise in a printing result.

[0006]

Then, in order to reduce this image degradation, the following proposals are made in JP.05-220977,A. It is the head shading method which cancels the concentration unevenness on an image by reading the concentration nonuniformity of a test pattern by the sensor, and performing

concentration amendment to each raster of each image corresponding to a nozzle.

[0007]

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention]

Concentration unevenness reduces concentration unevenness compared with drawing 14 (a) like drawing 14 (b) by the aforementioned head shading method. However, it was difficult to amend concentration unevenness by the level by which people are not seen. A kink ***** case, the dot has also reached greatly an order raster other than the raster which should carry out this arrival cartridge, and does not mean by amending, but is from ***** about effect at the raster concentration of order.

[0008]

[Means for Solving the Problem]

This invention is accomplished in view of said technical problem, and it is characterized by carrying out concentration amendment for every raster in consideration of the influence of the nozzle which carries out the regurgitation of the dot to each 3 of the raster in which a dot should carry out this arrival cartridge, and both its contiguity raster raster. That is, concentration unevenness can be abolished even if it is the recording head which does the effect on a raster before and after basing on the diameter of a dot, or a kink by amending not by 1 raster pair 1 raster amendment but by 3 raster pairs 1 raster.

[0009]

(Operation)

According to this invention, even if there is not only discharge quantity dispersion of the nozzle in a recording head but discharge direction dispersion, the concentration unevenness in a recording width can be abolished.

[0010]

[Embodiment of the Invention]

(Example 1)

<Recording device outline>

Drawing 1 is the strabism explanatory view of the ink jet recording device of a serial scanning method.

[0011]

If the whole recording apparatus configuration is explained first, it is the record sheet with which 1 consists of paper or a sheet plastic in drawing 1 . One record sheet 1 by which two or more sheet laminating was carried out to the cassette etc. is supplied at a time with a feed roller (un-illustrating). the 1st which is separated and arranged and drives fixed spacing with each stepping motor (not shown), respectively -- conveyance roller pair 2 and the 2nd -- it is constituted as conveyed in the direction of arrow-head A in conveyance roller pair 3.

[0012]

5 is the recording head of the ink jet type for recording on said record sheet 1. Ink is supplied from a non-illustrated ink cartridge and is breathed out according to a picture signal from a nozzle.

[0013]

This recording head 5 and ink cartridge were carried in carriage 4, and the carriage motor 23 has connected them with this carriage 4 through a belt 6 and Pulleys 7a and 7b. Therefore, it is constituted so that said carriage 4 may carry out a both-way scan along with the guide shaft 8 by the drive of said carriage motor 23.

[0014]

while breathing out ink to a record sheet 1 according to a picture signal, and recording an ink image, while a recording head 5 moves in the direction of arrow-head B, and a recording head's 5 returning to a home position by said configuration if needed and canceling the loading of a nozzle with an ink recovery device (un-illustrating) -- a conveyance roller pair -- 2 and 3 drive and a record sheet 1 is conveyed by one line in the direction of arrow-head A. Predetermined record is performed to a record sheet 1 by repeating this.

[0015]

Next, the control system for making each part material of said recording device drive is

explained.
[0016] While this control system is used as a work area of ROM20b which stores the control program and the various data of CPU20a, such as a microprocessor, and this CPU20a, and CPU20a as shown in drawing 2 for example Interim storage of various data, such as record image data, etc. RAM20c to perform The driver 27 for driving the control system 20 which it had, an interface 21, a control panel 22, and each motor (the motor 23 for a carriage drive, the motor 24 for feed motorised, the motor 25 for the 1st conveyance roller pair drive, motor 26 for the 2nd conveyance roller pair drive). And it consists of a driver 28 for a recording head drive.
[0017] The above-mentioned control section 20 performs I/O (informational I/O), such as various information (for example, a character pitch, an alphabetic character class, etc.) from a control panel 22, and a picture signal with an external device 29, through an interface 21. Moreover, said control section 20 outputs ON for making each motors 23-26 drive through an interface 21, an OFF signal, and a picture signal, and makes each part material drive with this picture signal.
[0018] Furthermore, CPU20a sends the printing image data equivalent to the writing scan of - time to a recording head.
[0019] <Image-processing outline>
Next, the image-processing approach of the record data generated with a host computer is explained.
[0020] Drawing 3 is an image processing system with which this invention is applied. In drawing 3, the host 201 has CPU, memory, external memory, the input section, and an interface with a printer.
[0021] CPU realizes the procedure of the color processing later mentioned by performing the program stored in memory, and quantization processing etc. This program is memorized by internal memory or is supplied from an external device. It connects with the recording apparatus 202 through the interface, and a host 201 transmits the image data which performed color processing to a recording apparatus 202, and makes printing record perform.
[0022] It is a block diagram explaining a drawing 4 this image processing, and is the processing flow which outputs R and G which are inputted, and B each color image data of 8 bits (256 gradation) as C, M, Y, and K each color 1 bit data.
[0023] R -- G -- B -- each -- a color -- eight -- bit data -- first -- a three dimension -- a look-up table (LUT) -- R -- ' -- G -- ' -- B -- ' -- each -- a color -- eight -- bit data -- changing -- having . This processing is transform processing for calling color space conversion processing (preceding paragraph color processing), and amending the difference of the color space (color space) of an input image, and the reappearance color space of an output unit.
[0024] this -- a color space conversion -- processing -- giving -- having had -- R -- ' -- G -- ' -- B -- ' -- each -- a color -- eight -- bit data -- a degree -- a three dimension -- LUT -- C -- M -- Y -- K -- each -- a color -- eight -- bit data -- changing -- having . This processing is color transform processing (calling latter-part color processing), and is color transform processing changed into the CMYK system color of an output system from the RGB system color of an input system. In the case of the recording device with which input data expresses a color by reflection of light, such as a printer, although a display etc. is the three primary colors (RGB) of the additive mixture of colors of an emitter in many cases, since a color material of subtractive color mixture in three primary colors (CMY) is used, this transform processing is performed.
[0025] Although asked by interpolation processing between the data which three-dimension LUT used

for three-dimension LUT used for preceding paragraph color processing or latter-part color processing holds data discretely, and are held, since this interpolation processing is a well-known technique, detailed explanation here is omitted.
[0026] As for C, M, Y, and K each color 8 bit data with which latter-part color processing was performed, output gamma amendment is performed by 1-dimensional LUT. The relation of the number of printing dots and output characteristics per unit area (reflection density etc.) guarantees the linear relation of C, M, Y, a K8 bit input level, and the output characteristics at that time because in many cases linear relation performs output gamma amendment since it does not become.
[0027] In this invention, said output gamma correction value is set up for every raster by 3 raster consideration mentioned later.
[0028] Inputs R and G and data with a color [B each] of 8 bits are changed into the color material C, M, and Y and the data with a color [K each] of 8 bits which output equipment has [the above] by explanation of the color processing section of operation.
[0029] Next, data with a Y [said / C, M and Y], and a color [K each] of 8 bits are sent to the quantization section. Since the color recording apparatus in this example is a binary recording apparatus, finally quantization processing of the data with a color [C, M, Y, and K each] of 8 bits is carried out at data with a color [C, M, Y, and K each] of 1 bit.
[0030] In this example, the quantization approach by the error diffusion method with possible making a binary recording device express the halftone image of a photograph tone smoothly is used. Data with a Y [said / C, M and Y], and a color [K each] of 8 bits are quantized by the error diffusion method to printing data with a color [C, M, Y, and K each] of 1 bit. As for the detail of the quantization approach using this error diffusion method, already various reference and already various papers including "Nikkei electronics 1978 year 5 month number P50-P65" are announced, and since it is a well-known technique, detailed explanation is omitted.
[0031] It is amendment gamma value setting outline > the whole < raster.
Next, the setting approach of the amendment gamma value of each raster in said 1-dimensional LUT is explained. Drawing 5 is a flow chart which shows processing to an amendment gamma setup the whole raster.
[0032] In UI screen of a non-illustrated printer driver, if amendment gamma value setting mode is chosen the whole raster as Step1, a stairway pattern like drawing 6 which is set up beforehand and is by Step2 will be printed. It is characterized by the record line of the direction of carriage in drawing 6 being the pattern which is printed by one nozzle of a recording head and uses all nozzles, respectively. In Step3, the stairway pattern of Step2 is read with input units, such as a scanner. Drawing 7 (a) expands a certain one record line recorded in the direction of carriage of drawing 6. This raster shown in drawing 7 (a) is a raster on which said record line should be recorded essentially, and as shown in drawing, the record line of drawing 6 is formed of the set of a dot. However, a dot will also attain to the front raster and back raster which are both contiguity raster of this raster by the discharge quantity for every nozzle, or dispersion of a discharge direction. Said input unit reads 3 of the front raster of the record line of drawing 6, this raster, and a back raster rasters, and inputs the average concentration of each raster like drawing 7 (b). By doing this activity for every record line, said 3 raster concentration table of each nozzle like drawing 8 can be created. The white alphanumeric of drawing 8 is this raster concentration, and a black alphabetic character is order raster concentration. In Step4, the pattern for unevenness detection shown in drawing 9 is printed. Here, it records with the same output amendment gamma value to all rasters. In Step5, average concentration detection is performed for every raster to the pattern of Step4.

[0033]

Concentration detection uses said input unit etc. In Step6, the average concentration of the whole pattern of Step4 is computed from average concentration the whole raster of Step5. Next, the amendment gamma value for every raster is computed as Step7. When the unevenness detection pattern of the request concentration 100 was recorded by n nozzles in Step4, the 1st raster average concentration was 105. Said 1st raster average concentration 105 is realized by 3 raster concentration detection of Step3 with the back raster concentration 15 of the n-th nozzle, this raster concentration 95 of the 1st nozzle, and the front raster concentration 20 of the 2nd nozzle. Then, the 1st raster concentration is expressed as $x(15+95+20)100xa1=120$ using a multiplier a1. This is similarly performed from the 2nd raster to the n-th raster, and multipliers a1-an are decided.

[0034]

Moreover, the average concentration of the unevenness detection pattern of Step4 was 96.7. Then, it amends using 3 raster concentration so that each raster may become said average concentration. It is the amendment request concentration of the 1st nozzle to the n-th nozzle, respectively d1, d2, and d3 It is referred to as $dn-2$, $dn-1$, and dn . Then, the 1st raster concentration of amendment can be expressed as $x(15xdn+95xd1020x\ d2)\ a1=95.8$. n variables and n formulas are made by carrying out from the 2nd raster similarly to the n-th raster, and the amendment request concentration from the 1st nozzle to the n-th nozzle is determined by solving these formulas. Since each of this amendment request concentration turns into output concentration to the input concentration of each nozzle as Step8, an amendment gamma value can be set up the whole raster. By using an amendment gamma value by 1-dimensional LUT of drawing 4 the whole raster shown in this drawing 10, printing without unevenness like drawing 10 is enabled.

[0035]

What is necessary is not to restrict a pattern to this and just to be able to detect the printing concentration by each delivery of a recording head, although the stairway pattern of drawing 6 was used for detecting the concentration for every raster in this example. Moreover, the physical quantity to detect may be not concentration but brightness. Furthermore although [this example] 3 raster concentration is detected per each delivery, respectively, the number of rasters beyond it may be detected.

[0036]

(Example 2)

In the example 1, this raster of the n-th nozzle, the back raster of the n-1st nozzles, and the front raster of the n+1st nozzles are said these same rasters, and were amended according to the record condition to this raster by these three nozzles. In this example, it is characterized by preparing a threshold in the record concentration to said this raster by said three nozzles. Even if record according to said three nozzles the case of the concentration below a threshold amends, it serves as white **** generated according to concentration being thin. Then, uniform record is enabled by recording this raster by nozzles other than these 3 nozzles.

[0037]

Moreover, when preparing a threshold in this raster concentration by said n-th nozzle and not fulfilling that threshold, record by this nozzle is forbidden. And uniform record is enabled by performing said this raster record by other nozzles.

[0038]

(Example 3)

Drawing 11 is drawing explaining the relative magnitude of the diameter of a dot by each nozzle. The sum of the front raster concentration 10 and this raster concentration 95 by the 1st nozzle of drawing 8, and the back raster 5 is 110, and the result of having calculated for each nozzle similarly is drawing 11. Since the concentration of this sum is in the relation between discharge quantity and an increasing function by each nozzle, the relative magnitude of the diameter of a dot by each nozzle will be expressed. The average (diameter of an average dot) of said concentration sum of each nozzle is computed from this, and a nozzle smaller than the average amends so that discharge quantity may be made [many], so that a larger nozzle than the

average may lessen discharge quantity. Drawing 12 is an amendment table for carrying out said amendment. Said table has the amount of impression time amount amendments of the electrical potential difference to the regurgitation component prepared in each nozzle to the amount of gaps from the average (the amount of diameter amendments of a dot). According to this table, the impression time amount of the electrical potential difference to each nozzle can be changed, and unevenness can be reduced by arranging the diameter of a dot. Moreover, a change of discharge quantity may be made by modification of the applied voltage on an applied-voltage table.

[0039]

Furthermore, drawing 13 is drawing explaining the amount of kinks of each nozzle. The sum of the front raster concentration 10 and this raster concentration 95 by the 1st nozzle of drawing 8, and the back raster 5 is 110, and, for the front raster concentration rate to this sum, 0.09 and this raster are [0.86 and a back raster] 0.05. The result of having performed this to each nozzle is drawing 13. if the rate of a front raster is larger than a back raster and the rate of kink ***** and a back raster is large to a front raster -- a back raster -- kink ***** -- it becomes things. The count of the regurgitation of each nozzle may be changed in consideration of this amount of kinks.

[0040]

[Effect of the Invention]

Uniform printing can be carried out, even if it is the recording head which has dispersion in discharge quantity or a discharge direction by setting up the amendment gamma value of each raster in consideration of 3 raster concentration of this raster by the regurgitation of each nozzle, and an order raster as explained above. And without carrying out a cost increase according to this invention, it is not based on a recording device and a recording head, but optimal unevenness-less printing is enabled.

[Brief Description of the Drawings]

[Drawing 1] The perspective view of an ink jet recording device.

[Drawing 2] The block diagram explaining the control logic of a recording apparatus.

[Drawing 3] The block diagram explaining the image processing system of a recording apparatus.

[Drawing 4] The explanatory view explaining the flow of the image processing of a recording device.

[Drawing 5] The flow chart which explains an amendment gamma value setup the whole raster of a recording apparatus.

[Drawing 6] The explanatory view explaining a stairway pattern

[Drawing 7] The explanatory view explaining this raster of one nozzle, a front raster, and a back raster.

[Drawing 8] The explanatory view explaining this raster of each nozzle, a front raster, and back raster concentration.

[Drawing 9] The explanatory view which explains concentration to be an unevenness detection pattern the whole raster.

[Drawing 10] The printing result according to an amendment gamma curve and it the whole raster.

[Drawing 11] The explanatory view explaining the relative discharge quantity of each nozzle.

[Drawing 12] Impression time amount amendment table.

[Drawing 13] The explanatory view explaining the amount of kinks of each nozzle.

[Drawing 14] The printing result by the conventional amendment gamma curve and it.

[Description of Notations]

- 1 Record Sheet
- 2 1st Conveyance Roller
- 3 2nd Conveyance Roller
- 4 Carriage
- 5 Recording Head
- 6 Belt
- 7 Pulley

- 8 Guide Shaft
- 20 Control Section
- 20a CPU
- 20b ROM
- 20c RAM
- 21 Interface
- 22 Control Panel
- 23 Carriage Motor
- 24 Feed Motor
- 25 1st Conveyance Roller Drive Motor
- 26 2nd Conveyance Roller Drive Motor
- 27 Motor Drive Driver
- 28 Recording Head Drive Driver

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DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

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- [Drawing 6] The explanatory view explaining a stairway pattern
- [Drawing 7] The explanatory view explaining this raster of one nozzle, a front raster, and a back raster.
- [Drawing 8] The explanatory view explaining this raster of each nozzle, a front raster, and back raster concentration.
- [Drawing 9] The explanatory view which explains concentration to be an unevenness detection pattern the whole raster.
- [Drawing 10] The printing result according to an amendment gamma curve and it the whole raster.
- [Drawing 11] The explanatory view explaining the relative discharge quantity of each nozzle.
- [Drawing 12] Impression time amount amendment table.
- [Drawing 13] The explanatory view explaining the amount of kinks of each nozzle.
- [Drawing 14] The printing result by the conventional amendment gamma curve and it.

[Description of Notations]

- 1 Record Sheet
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- 24 Feed Motor
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- 26 2nd Conveyance Roller Drive Motor
- 27 Motor Drive Driver

28 Recording Head Drive Driver

[Translation done.]

案をしている。テストパターンの濃度ムラをセンサによって読みとり、ノズルに対応する各画像の各ラスターに対して濃度補正を施すことにより、画像上の濃度むらを解消するヘッドシェーディング法である。

【0007】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】

前記のヘッドシェーディング法により濃度むららは図14(b)のように図14(a)に比べて濃度むらを低減する。しかしながら、濃度むらを人が見えないレベルまでに補正することは困難であった。ドットがヨレている場合、本来着弾するべきラスター以外の前後ラスターにも大きく着弾しており、補正をすることにより意図せず前後のラスター濃度に影響を及ぼすからである。

【0008】

【課題を解決するための手段】

本発明は前記課題に鑑みて成されたものであり、ドットが本来着弾するべきラスターとその隣接ラスターの3ラスターそれぞれに対するそのドットを吐出するノズルの影響力を考慮してラスター毎に濃度補正することを特徴とする。つまり、1ラスター対1ラスター補正ではなく、3ラスター対1ラスターで補正することにより、ドット径やヨレによる前後ラスターへの影響を及ぼす記録ヘッドであっても、濃度むらをなくすることができる。

【0009】

(作用)

本発明によれば、記録ヘッド内のノズルの吐出量ばらつきだけでなく、吐出方向ばらつきがあっても、記録幅内の濃度むらをなくすることができる。

【0010】

【発明の実施の形態】
(実施例1)

＜記録装置概要＞

図1はシリアルスキャン方式のインクジェット記録装置の斜視説明図である。

【0011】

先ず記録装置の全体構成を説明すると、図1において1は紙或いはプラスチックシートよりなる記録シートであって、カセット等に複数枚積層された記録シート1が給紙ローラ(不図示)によって一枚ずつ供給され、一定間隔を隔てて配置され、夫々個々のステッピングモータ(図示せず)によって駆動する第1搬送ローラ対2及び第2搬送ローラ対3によって矢印A方向に搬送されるごとく構成されている。

【0012】

5は前記記録シート1に記録を行うためのインクジェット式の記録ヘッドである。インクは不図示のインクカートリッジより供給され、ノズルから面番号に応じて吐出される。

【0013】

この記録ヘッド5及びインクカートリッジはキャリッジ4に搭載され、該キャリッジ4にはベルト6及びプーリー7a, 7bを介してキャリッジモータ23が連結している。従って、前記キャリッジモータ23の駆動により前記キャリッジ4がガイドシヤフト8に沿って往復走査するように構成されている。

【0014】

前記構成により、記録ヘッド5が矢印B方向に移動しながら面番号に応じてインクを記録シート1に吐出してインク像を記録し、必要に応じて記録ヘッド5はホームポジションに戻ってインク回復装置(不図示)によりノズルの目づまりを解消すると共に、搬送ローラ対2, 3が駆動して記録シート1を矢印A方向に1行分搬送する。これを繰り返すことによって記録シート1に所定記録を行うものである。

【0015】

次に前記記録装置の各部材を駆動させる為の制御系について説明する。

【0016】

この制御系は図2に示すように、例えばマイクプロセッサ等のCPU20a、該CPU

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20aの制御プログラムや各種データを格納しているROM20b、及びCPU20aのワークエリアとして使用されると共に、記録画像データなどの各種データの一時的保管等を行うRAM20c等を備えた制御系20、インターフェイス21、操作パネル22、各モータ(キャリッジ駆動用のモータ23、給紙モータ駆動用のモータ24、第1搬送ローラ対駆動用のモータ25、第2搬送ローラ対駆動用のモータ26)を駆動するためのドライバ27、及び記録ヘッド駆動用ドライバ28からなる。

【0017】

上記制御部20はインターフェイス21を介して操作パネル22からの各種情報(例えば文字ピッチ、文字種類等)や、外部装置29との面番号などのI/O(情報の入出力)を行う。また前記制御部20はインターフェイス21を介して各モータ23~26を駆動させるためのON、OFF信号、及び面番号を出力し、該面番号によって各部材を駆動させる。

【0018】

さらに、CPU20aは記録ヘッド毎回の記録走査に相当する印字画像データを送る。

【0019】

＜画像処理概要＞

次に、ホストコンピュータで生成する記録データの画像処理方法について説明する。

【0020】

図3は本発明が適用される画像処理システムである。図3においてホスト201はCPUと、メモリと、外部記憶と、入力部と、プリンタとのインターフェイスとを備えている。

【0021】

CPUはメモリに格納されたプログラムを実行することで後述する色処理、量子化処理の手順などを実現する。このプログラムは外部記憶に記憶され、或いは外部装置から供給される。ホスト201はインターフェイスを介して記録装置202と接続されており、色処理を施した画像データを記録装置202に送信して印刷記録を行わせる。

【0022】

図4該画像処理を説明するブロック図で、入力されるR、G、B各色8ビット(256階調)画像データをC、M、Y、K各色1ビットデータとして出力する処理フローである。

【0023】

R、G、B各色8ビットデータはまず3次元のルックアップテーブル(LUT)によりR、G、B、各色8ビットデータに変換される。この処理は色空間変換処理(前段色処理)と称し、入力画像の色空間(カラースペース)と出力装置の再現色空間の差を補正するための変換処理である。

【0024】

該色空間変換処理を施されたR'、G'、B'各色8ビットデータは次の3次元LUTによりC、M、Y、K各色8ビットデータに変換される。この処理は色変換処理(後段色処理と称し)で、入力系のRGB系カラーから出力系のCMYK系カラーに変換する色変換処理である。入力データはディスプレイなど発光体の加法混色の3原色(RGB)であることが多いが、プリンタなど光の反射で色を表現する記録装置の場合は減法混色の3原色(CMY)の色材が用いられるので該変換処理が行われる。

【0025】

前段色処理に用いられる3次元LUTや後段色処理に用いられる3次元LUTは離散的にデータを保持しており、保持しているデータ間は補間処理を求めるが、該補間処理は公知の技術であるのでここでの詳細な説明は省略する。

【0026】

後段色処理が施されたC、M、Y、K各色8ビットデータは、1次元LUTによって出力Y補正が施される。単位面積当たりの印字ドット数と出力特性(反射濃度など)の関係は多くの場合に線形関係とはならないので、出力Y補正を施すことでC、M、Y、K8ビットの入力レベルと、その時の出力特性との線形関係とを保証する。

【0027】

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本発明では後述する3ラスタ毎に前記出力 γ 補正値を設定する。
【0028】
以上が色処理部の動作説明で、入力R、G、B各色8ビットのデータが出力機器の有する色材C、M、Y、K各色8ビットのデータに変換される。
【0029】

次に前記C、M、Y、K各色8ビットのデータは量子化部に送られる。本実施例におけるカラー記録装置は2値記録装置であるのでC、M、Y、K各色8ビットのデータは最終的にC、M、Y、K各色1ビットのデータに量子化処理される。

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【0030】
本実施例では、写真露の中間調画像を2値記録装置で滑らかに表現させることが可能な誤差拡散法による量子化方法を用いる。誤差拡散法によって前記C、M、Y、K各色8ビットのデータをC、M、Y、K各色1ビットの印字データに量子化する。該誤差拡散法を用いた量子化方法の詳細は「日経エレクトロニクス1978年5月号P50-P65」を始めたとして既に様々な文献や論文が発表されており公知の技術であるので詳細な説明は省略する。

【0031】
＜ラスタ毎補正 γ 値設定概要＞
次に前記1次元LUTにおける各ラスタの補正 γ 値の設定方法について説明する。図5はラスタ毎補正 γ 設定までの処理を示すフローチャートである。

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【0032】
不図示のプリンタドライバのUI画面において、Step1としてラスタ毎補正 γ 値設定モードが選択されると、Step2で予め設定されている図6の様な階段パターンが印字される。図6におけるキャリッジ方向の記録線はそれぞれ記録ヘッドの1ノズルにより印字され、全ノズルを使用するようなパターンであることを特徴としている。Step3では、Step2の階段パターンをスキヤナ等の入力装置により読みとる。図7(a)は図6のキャリッジ方向に記録したある1本の記録線を拡大したものである。図7(a)に示す本ラスタは前記記録線が本来記録されるべきラスタであり、図のようにドットの場合により図6の記録線が形成されている。しかし、ノズル毎の吐出量や吐出方向のばらつきにより本ラスタの両隣接ラスタである前ラスタや後ラスタにもドットが及んでしまう。前記入力装置は図6の記録線の前ラスタ、後ラスタの3ラスタを読み、それぞれのラスタの平均濃度を図7(b)のように入力する。この作業を各記録線毎に行うことにより、図8のような各ノズルの前記3ラスタ濃度テーブルが作成できる。図8の白文字数字が本ラスタ濃度であり、黒文字は前後ラスタ濃度である。Step4では図9に示すむら検出用のパターンを印字する。ここでは全ラスタに対して同一の出力補正 γ 値で記録を行う。Step5ではStep4のパターンに対してラスタ毎に平均濃度検出を行う。

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【0033】
濃度検出は前記入力装置等を用いる。Step6ではStep5のラスタ毎平均濃度からStep4のパターン全体の平均濃度を算出する。次にStep7としてラスタ毎の補正 γ 値を算出する。Step4においてn本のノズルにより所望濃度100のむら検出パターンを記録したところ第1ラスタ平均濃度が105であった。前記第1ラスタ平均濃度105はStep3の3ラスタ濃度検出により、第nノズルの後ラスタ濃度15と第1ノズルの本ラスタ濃度95と第2ノズルの前ラスタ濃度20によって成り立っている。そこで、第1ラスタ濃度は係数 a_1 を用いて $(15+95+20) \times 100 \times a_1 = 120$ と表す。これを第2ラスタから第nラスタまで同様に行い、係数 $a_1 \sim a_n$ を決める。

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【0034】
また、Step4のむら検出パターン平均濃度が96.7であった。そこで、各ラスタ一が前記平均濃度になるように3ラスタ濃度を用いて補正する。第1ノズルから第nノズルの補正所望濃度をそれぞれ $d_1, d_2, d_3, \dots, d_{n-2}, d_{n-1}, d_n$ とする。

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すると補正第1ラスタ濃度は $(15 \times d_n + 95 \times d_1 + 20 \times d_2) \times a_1 = 95$ と表すことができる。第2ラスタから第nラスタまでと同様に行うことでn個の濃度とn個の式ができて、これらの式を解くことにより第1ノズルから第nノズルまでの補正所望濃度を決定する。Step8としてこの各補正所望濃度が各ノズルの入力濃度に対する出力濃度になるのでラスタ毎補正 γ 値を設定することができ、この図10に示すラスタ毎補正 γ 値を図4の1次元LUTで使用するることにより、図10のようにならぬ印字を可能とする。

【0035】

本実施例ではラスタ毎の濃度を検出するのに図6の階段パターンを使用した。が、パターンはこれに限るものではなく、記録ヘッドの各吐出口による印字濃度が検出できればよい。また、検出する物理量は濃度ではなく、輝度であってもよい。さらに本実施例では各吐出口につき3ラスタ濃度をそれぞれ検出するとししたが、それ以上のラスタ数を検出してもよい。

【0036】

(実施例2)

実施例1では、第nノズルの本ラスタと第n-1ノズルの後ラスタ、第n+1ノズルの前ラスタは同じ前記本ラスタであり、この3ノズルによる本ラスタへの記録状態により補正していた。本実施例では前記3ノズルによる前記本ラスタへの記録濃度に閾値を設けることを特徴とする。閾値以下の濃度の場合、前記3ノズルによる記録は補正をしても、濃度が薄いことにより発生する白ずじとなる。そこで、この3ノズル以外のノズルにより本ラスタを記録すること、むらのない記録が可能とする。

【0037】

また、前記第nノズルによる本ラスタ濃度に閾値を設けて、その閾値に満たない場合はこのノズルによる記録を禁止する。そして前記本ラスタ記録を他のノズルにより行うことでむらのない記録を可能とする。

【0038】

(実施例3)

図11は各ノズルによるドット径の相対的な大きさを説明する図である。図8の第1ノズルによる前ラスタ濃度10と本ラスタ濃度95と後ラスタ濃度5の和は110であり、同様計算を各ノズルに行った結果が図11である。この和の濃度が各ノズルにより吐出量と増加閾数の関係にあるので、各ノズルによるドット径の相対的な大きさを表すこととなる。これより各ノズルの前記濃度平均値(平均ドット径)を算出し、平均値より大きいノズルは吐出量を少なくするように、平均値より小さいノズルは吐出量を多くするように補正をする。図12は前記補正をするための補正テーブルである。前記テーブルは平均値からのずれ量(ドット径補正量)に対する各ノズル内に設けられた吐出素子への電圧の印加時間補正量を持っている。このテーブルに従い各ノズルに対する電圧の印加時間を変更し、ドット径を揃えることでむらを低減することができ、また、吐出量の変更は印加電圧テーブルによる印加電圧の変更によって行ってもよい。

【0039】

さらに、図13は各ノズルのヨレ量を説明する図である。図8の第1ノズルによる前ラスタ濃度10と本ラスタ濃度95と後ラスタ濃度5の和は110であり、この和に対する前ラスタ濃度割合が0.09、本ラスタ濃度割合が0.86、後ラスタ濃度割合が0.05である。これを各ノズルに対して行った結果が図13である。前ラスタの割合が後ラスタより大きければ前ラスタにヨレており、後ラスタの割合が大きければ後ラスタにヨレていることになる。このヨレ量を考慮して各ノズルの吐出回数を変更してもよい。

【0040】

【発明の効果】

以上説明したとおり、各ノズルの吐出による本ラスタと前後ラスタの3ラスタ濃度を考慮して各ラスタの補正 γ 値を設定することにより、吐出量や吐出方向にばらつきがある記録ヘッドであっても、むらのない印字をすることができ、しかも、本発明によ

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ばコスト増することなく、記録装置、記録ヘッドによらず最適なむらなし印字を可能とする。

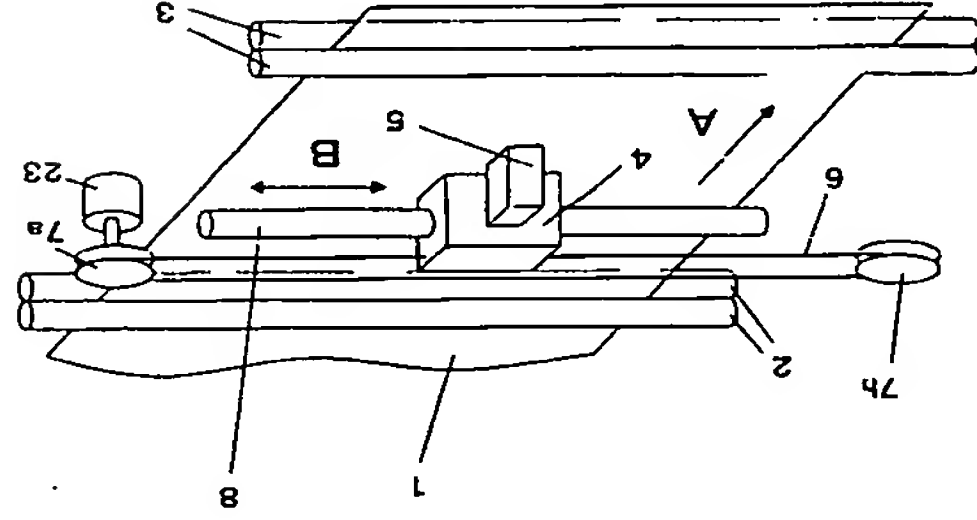
【図面の簡単な説明】

- 【図1】インクジェット記録装置の斜視図。
- 【図2】記録装置の制御ロジックを説明するブロック図。
- 【図3】記録装置の画像処理システムを説明するブロック図。
- 【図4】記録装置の画像処理の流れを説明する説明図。
- 【図5】記録装置のラスタスター毎補正γ値設定を説明するフローチャート。
- 【図6】階段パターンを説明する説明図
- 【図7】1ノズルの本ラスタスター、前ラスタスター、後ラスタスターを説明する説明図。
- 【図8】各ノズルの本ラスタスター、前ラスタスター、後ラスタスター濃度を説明する説明図。
- 【図9】むら検出パターンとそのラスタスター毎濃度を説明する説明図。
- 【図10】ラスタスター毎補正γ曲線とそれによる印字結果。
- 【図11】各ノズルの相対的な吐出量を説明する説明図。
- 【図12】印加時間補正テーブル。
- 【図13】各ノズルのヨレ量を説明する説明図。
- 【図14】従来の補正γ曲線とそれによる印字結果。

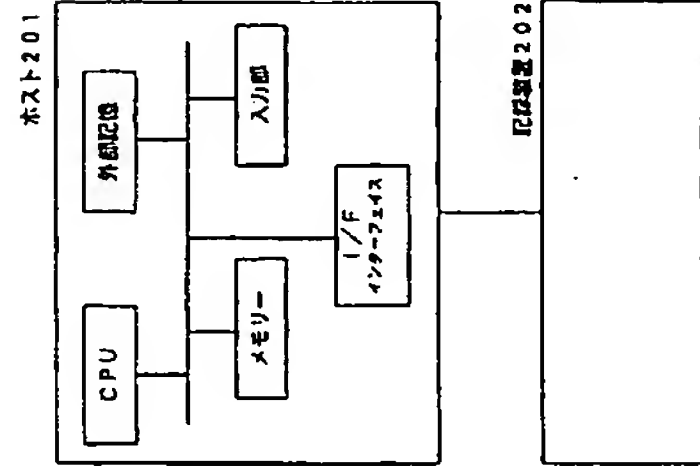
【符号の説明】

- 1 記録シート
- 2 第1搬送ローラ
- 3 第2搬送ローラ
- 4 キャリッジ
- 5 記録ヘッド
- 6 ベルト
- 7 プーリ
- 8 ガイドシャフト
- 20 制御部
- 20a CPU
- 20b ROM
- 20c RAM
- 21 インターフェース
- 22 操作パネル
- 23 キャリッジモータ
- 24 給紙モータ
- 25 第1搬送ローラ駆動モータ
- 26 第2搬送ローラ駆動モータ
- 27 モータ駆動ドライバ
- 28 記録ヘッド駆動ドライバ

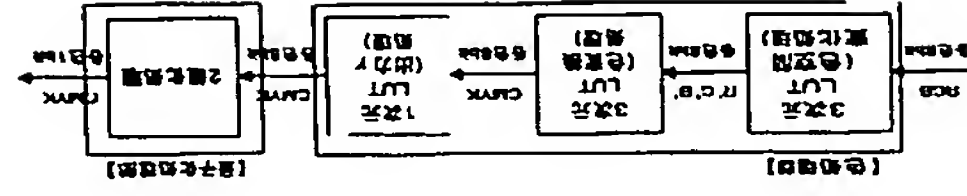
【図1】



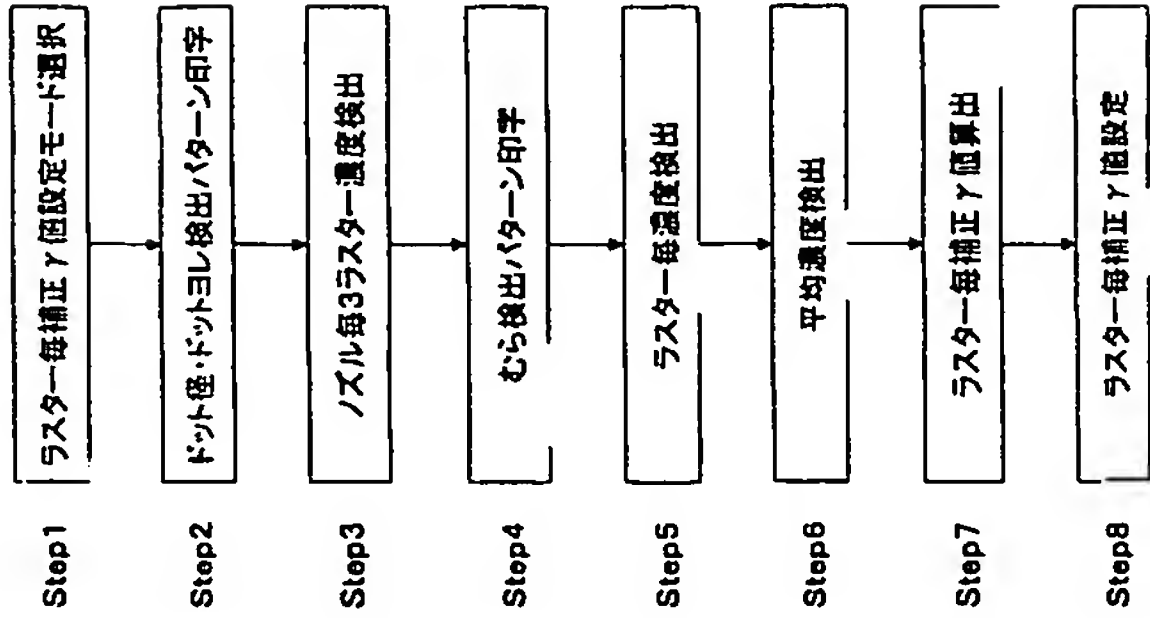
【図3】



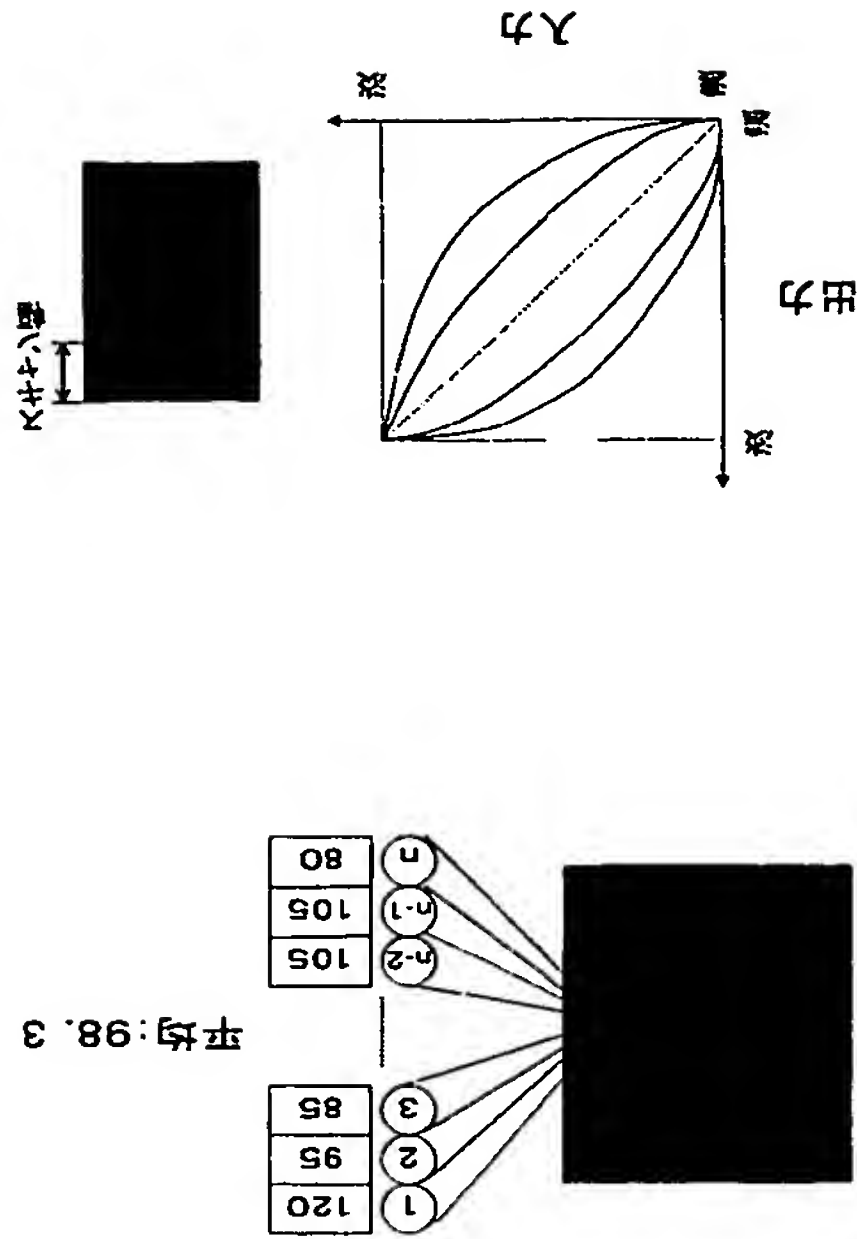
【図4】



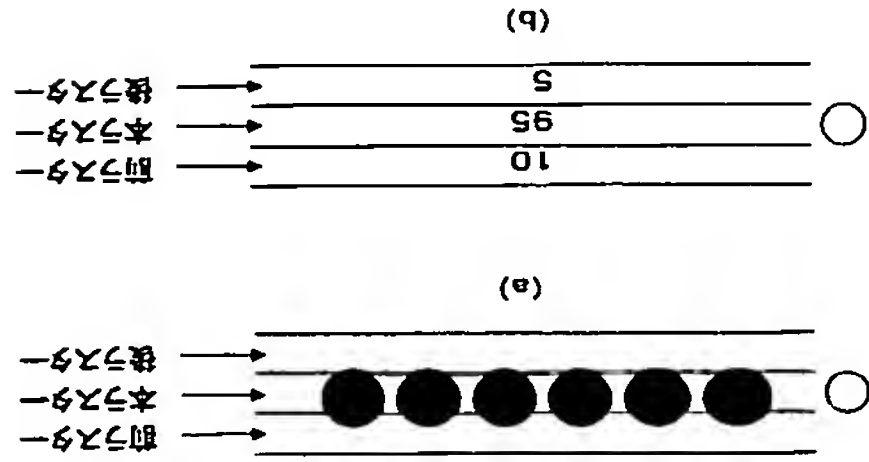
【図 5】



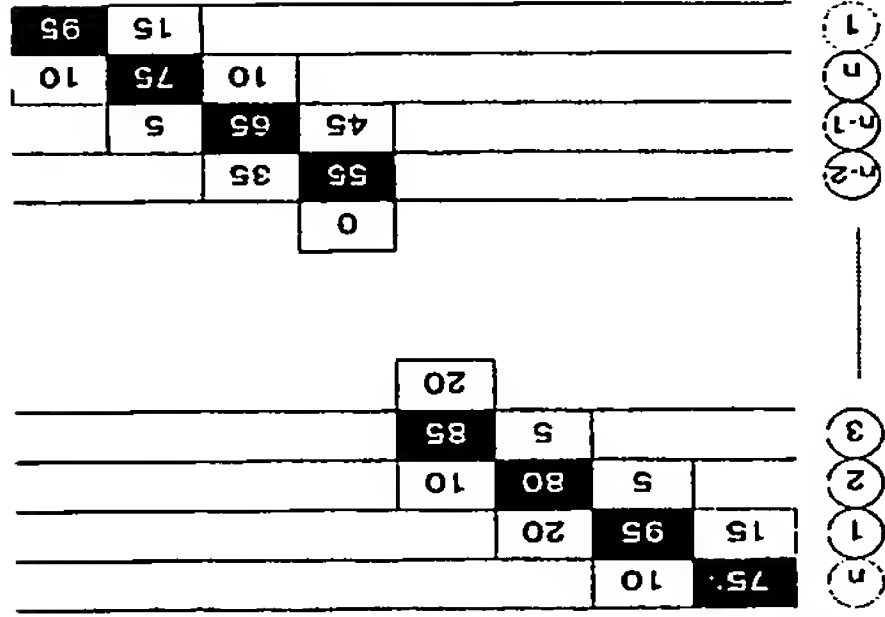
【図 9】



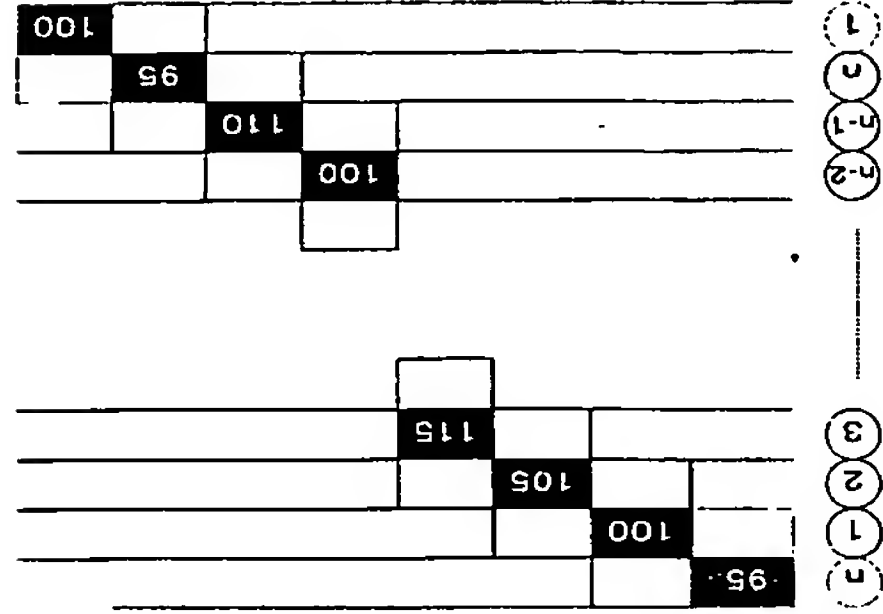
【図 7】



【図 8】



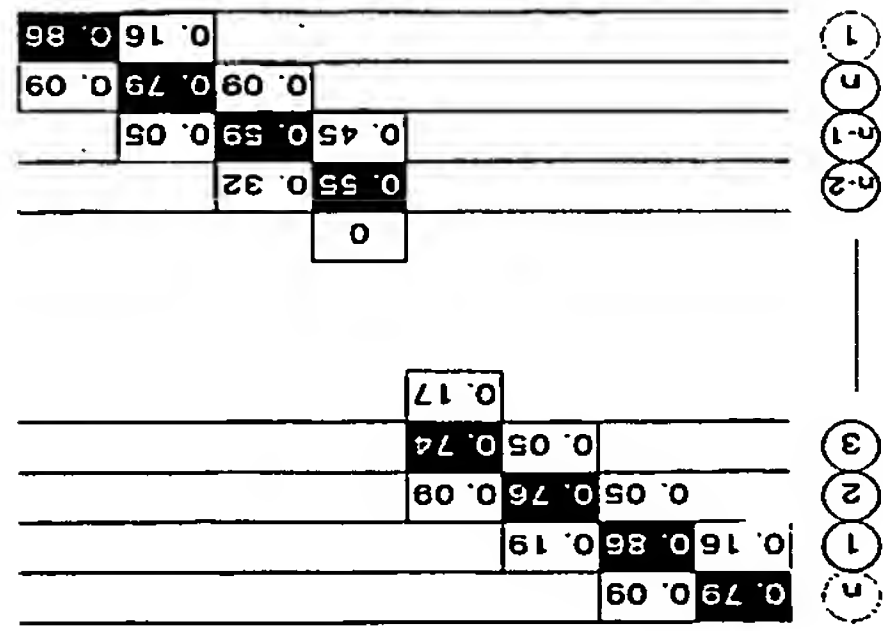
【図 11】



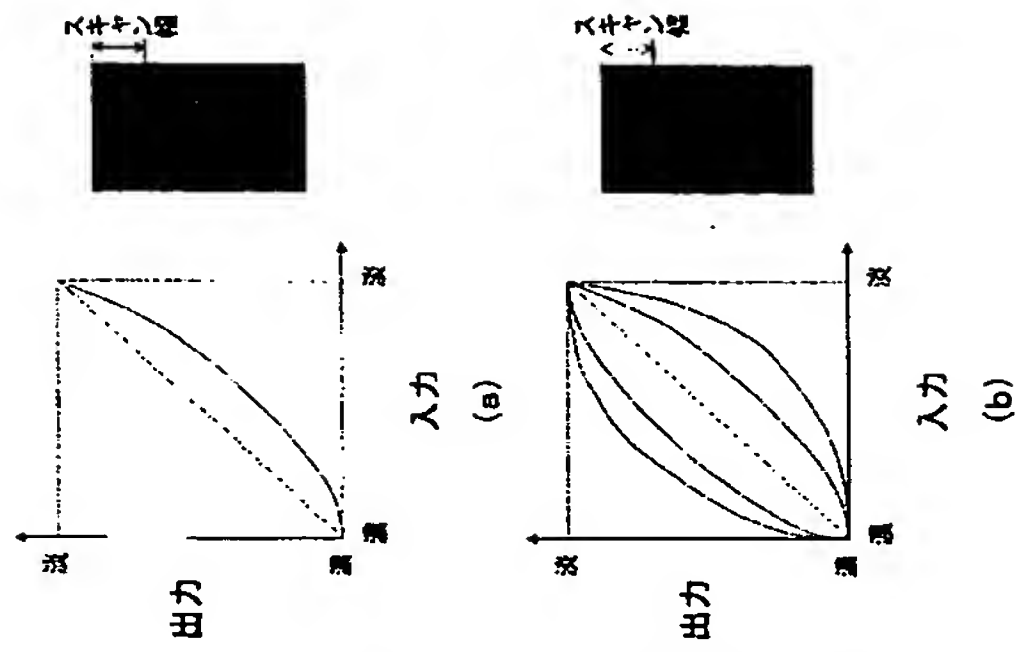
【図 12】

ドット径補正量(μm)	印加時間補正量(μs)
-15	-0.5
-10	-0.3
-5	-0.1
0	0
+5	+0.1
+10	+0.3
+15	+0.5

【図13】



【図14】



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